

The Best Plea for the Maine Law.

BY MRS. H. L. BOSTWICK.

Let me see it," said the pretty wife, who was one of the nicest of wives, with plumpness and goodness dimpling all over her face. "Let me see it; and she leaned over Smith's shoulder, pressing her arm upon his own as she looked at the parchment. But all at once Smith's visage grew long. Smith's wife's visage grew black. Smith was not profane, but now he ripped out an awful oath: "Blast it, wife, these infernal scoundrels at Trenton have gone and divorced us!" It was too true; the parchment which he held was a bill of divorce, in which the name of Smith and Smith's wife appeared in frightfully legible letters.

Women—children—and no other! Not a father nor a son; Not a husband nor a brother; Women—children—every one, Grown and beggared with starvation, Thronged the State House's ample floor; And I deemed such depopulation Never waited there before.

There were babies, in beauty tender— Maidens blighted in their bloom— Nursing mothers, wan and slender— Matrons, bending toward the tomb. Past they entered—never speaking; And I smiled—how could I know? 'Twas the Maine Law they were seeking, In their poverty and woe!

Then one spoke—"Oh, rulers! harken! Nor in anger turn away, That your wretchedness to-day! Once for us were hearth-fires burning— Where, when daily toll was done, To a plenteous board returning, Came loud husband, wife and son, "But the tempter came, and lured them To the haunts of evil men— Pressed the wine-cup and assured them "Only once—and yet again— Till at last each cheerful dwelling Grew a bare and rotten shed; But the poison still was selling, And our children cried for bread!

"Oft we wept, implored, upbraided— Valued than the idliest song! For the tempter still persuaded, And the appetite was strong. Now, in friendless desolation, Plead we for these fallen men— Only bear the faint temptation, They may be restored again."

Then a child, with sunken features, And long fingers, thin and pale, Toward the wond'ring Legislature Turning, followed up the tale: "We are wretched—Oh, our rulers! All your little ones, we know, Sit in school-rooms and in churches, But we have no clothes to go!

"Only give us back our fathers, From the sinks wherein they lie, So, from work-shop, field and forum, We may bless you till we die." Then I felt my heart was bleeding, And my eyes would overflow For the little children pleading, In their poverty and woe.

But I woke—and quick upstarting, Rubbed my eyelids with my hand— Saw the hickory fagots parting, And each little severed brand In an ash-tray shrouded lay, And the taper had burned low; Yet I heard these pleadings crying For the Maine Law in their woe!

The Double Disappointment.

One winter there came to Trenton, New Jersey, two men, named Smith and Jones, who had both of them designs upon the Legislature. Jones had a bad wife, and was in love with a pretty woman. He wished to be divorced from the bad wife, so that he might marry the pretty woman, who, by the by, was a widow, with black eyes, and such a bust! Therefore, Jones came to Trenton for a divorce. Smith had a good wife, plump as a robin, good as an angel, and the mother of ten children; and Smith did not want to be divorced, but did want to get a charter for a turnpike, or plank-road, to extend from Pig's Run to Terrapin Hollow. Well, they, with these different errands, came to Trenton, and addressed the assembled wisdom with the usual arguments. 1st, suppers, mainly composed of oysters, with a rich background of steak and venison; 2d, liquors in great plenty, from "Jersey lightning"—which is a kind of locomotive at full speed, reduced to liquid shape—to Newark champagne. To speak in plain prose, Jones, the divorce man, gave a champagne supper, and Smith, the turnpike man, followed with a champagne breakfast; under the mollifying influence of which, the assembled wisdom passed both the divorce and turnpike bills, and Jones and Smith—a copy of each bill in their pockets—went rejoicing home, over miles of sand, and through the tribulation of many stage coaches. Smith arrived at home in the evening, and as he sat down in his parlor, his pretty wife beside him—how pretty she did look! and five of her children asleep over head, the other five studying their lessons in the corner of the room, Smith was induced to expatiate upon the good result of his mission to Trenton.

"A turnpike, my dear. I am one of the directors, and will be president. It will set us up, love; we can send the children to boarding-school and live in style, out of the toll. Here is the charter, honey."

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Mrs. Smith wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron. "Here's a turnpike!" she said sadly, "and with the whole of our ten children staring me in the face, I aint your wife! Here's a turnpike!"

"Blast the 'pike and the legislature, and—!" Well, the fact is that Smith, reduced to single blessedness, and "enacted" into a stranger to his own wife, swore awfully. Although the night was dark, and most of the denizens of Smith's village had gone to bed, Smith bid his late wife put on her bonnet, and arm in arm they proceeded to the house of the clergyman of their church.

"Goodness bless me!" exclaimed the mild, good man, as he saw them enter, Smith looking like the very last of Jones' shad, and Smith's wife wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron—"Goodness bless me, what's the matter?"

"The matter is, I want you to marry us two right off!" replied Smith.

"Marry you?" ejaculated the clergyman, with expanded fingers and awful eyes, "are you drunk or crazy?"

"I aint crazy, and I wish I was drunk," said Smith, desperately; "the fact is, brother Goodwin, that some scoundrels at Trenton, unbeknown to me, and at dead of night, have gone and divorced me from my own wife; she is the mother of—of—nine children!"

"Ten," suggested Mrs. Smith, who was crying. "Here's a turnpike!"

Well, the good minister seeing the state of the case (the Trenton parchment was duly produced from the pocket of the lugubrious Smith), married them over straight-way, and would not take a fee. The fact is, grave as he was, he was dying to be alone, so that he could give vent to a suppressed laugh, which was shaking him all over; and Smith and Smith's wife went joyfully home and kissed every one of their ten children. The little Smiths never knew that their father and mother had been made strangers to each other by legislative enactment.

Meanwhile, and on the self same night, Jones returned to his native town—Burlington, I believe—and sought at once the fine pair of black eyes which he hoped shortly to call his own. The pretty widow sat on the sofa, a white kerchief tied carelessly about her round, white throat, her black hair laid in silky waves against each rosy cheek.

"Divorce is the word," cried Jones, playfully patting her double chin. "The fact is, Eliza, I'm rid of that cursed woman, and you and I'll be married to-night. I know how to manage those scoundrels at Trenton. A champagne supper (or was it a breakfast?) did the business for them. Put on your bonnet and let us go to the preacher's at once, dearest."

The widow (who was among widows as peaches are among apples), put on her bonnet and took Jones' arm, and—

"Just look how handsome it is put on parchment!" cried Jones, pulling out the document before her. "Here's the law which says that Jacob Jones and Anna Caroline Jones are two! Look at it!" Putting her plump, gloved hand on his shoulder, she did look at it.

"O dear!" she said, with her rose-bud lips, and sank back, half fainting, on the sofa.

"O blazes!" cried Jones, and sank beside her, rustling the fatal parchment in his hand. "Here's lots of happiness and champagne gone to ruin."

It was a hard case. Instead of being divorced and at liberty to marry the widow, Jacob Jones was simply, by the Legislature of New Jersey, incorporated into a turnpike company, and what made it worse, authorized with his brother directors, to construct a turnpike from Burlington to Bristol.

When you reflect that Burlington and Bristol are located just a mile apart, on opposite sides of the Delaware river, you will perceive the extreme hopelessness of Jones' case.

"It's all the fault of that turnpike man, who gave 'em the champagne supper, or was it a breakfast?" cried Jones, in agony. "If they'd a chartered me to be a turnpike from Pig's Run to Terrapin Hollow, I might have borne it; but the very idea of building a turnpike from Burlington to Bristol bears an absurdity on the face of it." So it did.

"And you ain't divorced?" said Eliza, a tear rolling down each cheek.

"No?" thundered Jones, crushing his hat between his knees, "and what is worse, the legislature has adjourned and gone home drunk, and won't be back to Trenton till next year!" It was a hard case.

The mistake [?] had occurred on the last day of the session, when legislators and transcribing clerks were laboring under the effects of a champagne supper, followed by a champagne breakfast. Smith's name had been put where Jones's ought to have been, and "wiseguysey," as the Latin poet has it.

An Indignant Lady in a Doggery.

The Cambridge City (Ind.) News, relates the following:

"On Thursday, of last week, a young man of this place (whose name we shall withhold) became intoxicated, and so continued for some three days, to the great mortification of his young wife and acquaintances. During this time his wife visited all the houses in this place where liquor is sold, and politely requested them not to sell her husband any more. They all declared that they had not and would not sell him any liquor. One Thursday afternoon, while out in search of her husband, she was informed that he was in a sink-hole, near the railroad. The lady immediately went there, and found her husband drunk and almost senseless. At the lamentable condition in which she found her husband, she became very much enraged at the doggery-keeper. Provoked to madness, she seized a club of about two and a half feet in length, and set in upon the whisky-shop. The first lick she broke to pieces a large decanter, filled with whisky, just placed on the counter as she stepped in, for the accommodation of some of his drunken sots then within. The next move she swept pitcher and glasses from the counter. This made the old doggery-keeper furious. He attacked the lady, while she, with both hands, seized the club, and with one fell stroke brought his highness to the floor. He raised the cry of murder and fled. The rest of the inebriates, seeing the practical demonstrations of her as practiced on the keeper, fled as fast as their locomotive powers could bear them away from the scene. Having the shop to herself, she coolly and deliberately went to the whisky barrel and beer keg and broke the faucets, causing the contents to run out over the floor; after which she broke all the jugs, bottles and flasks that could be found, and which he kept for the accommodation of his blossomed-nosed customers."

Saturday Night.

What blessed things Saturday nights are, writes some one in the "Tribune," and what would the world do without them? Those breathing moments in the tramping march of life; those little twilights in the broad and garish glare of noon, when pale yesterdays' look beautiful through the shadows, and faces "changed" long ago, smile sweetly again in the bush; when one remembers the "old folks at home," and the old fashioned fire, and the "old arm chair," and the little brother that died, and the little sister that was "translated."

Saturday nights makes people human; set their hearts to beating softly, as they used to do before the world turned them into war-drums, and jarred them to pieces with tattoos.

The ledger closes with a clash; the iron-doored vaults come too with a bang; up go the shutters with a will; click goes the key in the lock. It is Saturday night, and business breathes free again. Homeward, ho! The door that has been ajar all the week gently closes behind him; the world is shut out. Shut out! Shut in, rather. Here are his treasures after all, and not in the vault, and not in the book; save the record in the old family Bible—and not in the bank.

May be you are a bachelor, frosty and forty. Then, poor fellow! Saturday night is nothing to you, just as you are nothing to anybody. Get a wife, blue-eyed or black-eyed, but above all, true-

eyed; get a little home, no matter how little, and a little sofa, just to hold two, or two and a-half, and then get the two, or the two and a-half in it of a Saturday night, and then read this paragraph by the light of your wife's eyes, and thank God and take courage.

The dim and dusty shops are swept up; the hammer is thrown down, the apron is doffed, and labor hastens with a light step, homeward bound.

"Saturday night!" feebly murmurs the languishing, as she turns wearily upon her couch, "and is there another to come?"

"Saturday night, at last!" whispers the weeper above the dying, "and it is Sunday to-morrow, and — to-morrow!"

Vision of Eternity.

Time is short, and eternity is long; yet in this short time I must prepare for a long eternity. Oh! what a duration is before me! but what an infatuation is within me, that I should mind the trifling things of time, and forget the interest of eternity! Truly, when I compare eternity with time, I am astonished that eternity does not swallow up time in my concerns and meditations. With what night visions, deceptive fantasies, and delusive dreams are we entertained here, in comparison of that divine understanding, intuitive knowledge, noonday discoveries, vigor and activity of soul, we shall be possessed of when we awake to immortality from all the slumbers of a transitory life! And yet (woe is me), am I not more anxious to grow in earth than to grow for heaven? Will not the fear of temporal losses at times out-balance the joy I should have in believing? While God and glory have a passing meditation in my heart, have not the vanities of the world a permanent mansion? Does not worldly sorrow take deeper root in my soul than spiritual joy? And were my thoughts counted one by one, while vanities reap the whole harvest, sacred things have scarce the tithe! Is this, alas! the behavior of a candidate for bliss, the practice of an expectant of glory? One thinks least of what he loves last. O mournful conclusions! that I love God least, since he is least in my thoughts! But let me rise in my contemplations, and see the goodly host of the ransomed nations, dwelling in the noonday displays of his glory, possessed of pleasures free as the fountain whence they flow, and full as their unlimited desires. Their souls are replenished with the most refined satisfaction, sacred delight and substantial joy. What an august assembly are the inhabitants of the better country—wearing crowns, holding sceptres, reigning on thrones, walking in white, exalted in their nature, their conceptions bright, their visions cloudless, their thoughts elevated, their songs transporting, their happiness confirmed, their love burning, and all their powers entranced forever!

CHARACTER OF THE TRUE PHILOSOPHER.

—The character of the true philosopher is to hope all things not impossible, and to believe all things not unreasonable. He who has seen obscurities which appeared impenetrable in physical and mathematical science suddenly dispelled, and the most barren and unpromising fields of inquiry converted as if by inspiration, into rich and inexhaustible springs of knowledge and power, on a single change of one point of view, or by merely bringing to bear on them some principles which it never occurred before to try, will surely be the very last to acquiesce in any dispiriting prospects of either the present or future destinies of mankind; while, on the other hand, the boundless views of intellectual and moral, as well as material relations, which open on him on all hands, in the course of these pursuits, the knowledge of the trivial place he occupies in the scales of creation, and the sense continually pressed upon him of his own weakness and incapacity to suspend or modify the slightest movement of the vast machinery he sees in action around him, must effectually convince him that humility of pretension, no less than confidence of hope, is what best becomes his character. Sir John Herschel.

Washington Irving says:—"I have noticed that married men falling into misfortunes, are more likely to retrieve their condition than single men." There's female influence for you, old, early, vinegar-hearted bachelors!